Nelda Crowell
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Interviewer: Carol Hammond
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Project director: Diane Nevill
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HAMMOND: This is Carol Hammond. I'm the Associate Vice-president for Information Services at Thunderbird School of Global Management. Today we are talking with Nelda Crowell. Nelda's currently the archivist for Thunderbird. So Nelda, I'd like to start out and just say that you've been at Thunderbird for a long time. Can you tell me when you arrived and what positions you've had, and what made you choose to come to Thunderbird?

CROWELL: I came in 1983, and I came here from Arizona State University where I was editor of publications for the College of Business. I wasn't looking for a new job. I had a good job, and I **liked** my job. In fact, I thought I had the best job in the state. But Tom Bria was at Thunderbird as director of alumni relations. Actually, he was also involved in development. But they had a position open, and I knew Tom from when I was active in the ASU Alumni Association, where he had been Director of Alumni Relations. So he went from ASU to Thunderbird, and he said, "Nelda, we would really like to have you over here at Thunderbird." And I said, "Well, okay, I'll take a look." It sounded interesting, but I would have had to take a pay cut, and I wasn't sure I wanted to do that. So he said, "Well, I will tell you we have to put out a nationwide search. So why don't we just go ahead, and we'll see what happens." So they put out a nationwide search, they had 106 applicants **and** he was not the decision maker on this position. I had to be interviewed by a panel of five people. There was the vice-president for External Affairs,

who was Bob Horn, who was Tom's boss. There were some faculty, and a couple of other administrators. Dorothy … can't remember her name … one of the faculty. So I came in and I thought, "You know, this is just such an interesting place." And I had been on the campus as a young girl because Berger Erickson went to my church, and he allowed us to come swimming here. So there were some people that I ran around with when I was in college, and we came out here swimming. **And** when I was in college, I also had interviewed, or been interviewed by a woman who was a student here. Her name was Glee Mitchell, and that was to go on a European program called the Experiment in International Living. And you had to be interviewed by a former participant before you could go on that. She was a student out here. And so I knew about the school, and it's interesting because when she interviewed me, she interviewed me in her dorm, which was in "C" Building, which later became the Archives Office. So it was very, you know, an interesting thing. But I had heard of the school, I knew what they did, and I apparently interviewed well because I got the job.

A month after I was in the job, I was called in by the vice-president, Bob Horn, and he said to me, "You know, Nelda, it wasn't unanimous that you take the job here. There was one person who wasn't necessarily in favor of you taking this position. That was me. I just wanted to tell you that is the worst mistake in judgment I have ever made!" So I was exonerated, and that is why I came. And I **did** take a pay cut to come here, which later proved to be fine. But that's why I came.

HAMMOND: And what was the job title when you started?

CROWELL: The job title was Director of Communications. And I changed that very quickly to delete the "s," so that it was director of Communica**tion**. And I did that

because I saw the position as having a more strategic view, as being a position that encouraged communication in **all** of its aspects, not just pieces of paper.

HAMMOND: Okay. In those days, what elements made up that job? What was it?

CROWELL: Well, when I came, it was primarily the alumni magazine. There was an assistant, who was a student spouse. And that person helped with what we called the updates in the magazine, which were the little blurbs about what the alumni were doing. And there was a student who was an editor, but that was all. And the position really hadn't been much defined other than that. It was public relations. There were a few special events. But the direction they wanted to go was having all of the publications under one office. And that really made sense, and that was another reason that I chose to come, because that was an opportunity that I had to develop a whole **program** of publications, instead of just hit-or-miss. And when I came, the catalog was being produced out of the Admissions Office. The graduation program was being produced out of the President's Office. There was no internal newsletter to speak of. Occasionally they'd send out some bulletins, but that was about it. The magazine was done by the Communications Office in conjunction with the Alumni Office, and other than that, there wasn't much. Any brochures that were done were done by the individual entity. So if Executive Education wanted to do a brochure, they did it, and it didn't matter what it looked like, whether it was coordinated with the school or not.

And so that was really my first mission, was to pull some of these publications in, to coordinate them. And the Dean of Admissions was John Arthur, and he was **so** supportive, and just **so** helpful in helping me to do the catalog. He really didn't want to do the catalog. It wasn't something that he necessarily was interested in doing, so he was

happy to turn it over. And the graduation program was the same way. The President's secretary really didn't necessarily **want** to do it. And she'd had a broker, a printing broker, handle it, who charged them a lot more than he should have. So when I came in, I took those under my office, and got a graphic designer to help us design a coordinated look, which changed over the years. And we then were able to get some design elements. And there's some controversy in that. You have to get some agreement. So we were able to get a consensus on what we wanted.

HAMMOND: Since you have been here for such a long span of time, can you tell us what are the biggest changes you've seen in the school over the time you've been here?

CROWELL: That's a good question. You can look at it two ways: one is the way the biggest change is, but the other is what has remained the same. And so let me start with what has remained the same. And that is that I think the student body, although we have a lot more foreign students here, their attitude and the **kind** of person—there's a clear Thunderbird Student Model that doesn't change. And it hasn't changed in 60-some years. The curriculum has changed in small ways. Sometimes you might think they're big ways, but overall, the idea of having an international business program that is only international, and the idea of having languages as a part of that mix, and international studies as part of the mix, is **still**—and they've always called it the Thunderbird Model, because that's what we started with, and that's what we have still today. Even though the language requirement has changed in its configuration—that is, we don't make students study the language **here**, they don't have to take our courses—which they did when I came in 1983. Now we simply ask that they learn a language, but they still need to have that language requirement. So that has remained the same.

The campus location—and it has its advantages and disadvantages—but one of the advantages is that this location is separated from a larger community. And that makes for a very concentrated graduate program experience. I think that's a good thing. When you come here, first of all, you don't come to a place that you've never seen, in Arizona, without being a certain kind of person. We attract that kind of person. And that's that Thunderbird Student Model. So that has remained the same. We've been in the same location, and we've had this curriculum, and we have these wonderful students. And the overall tone of the program.

What's different is the size of the student body has changed over the years in a lot of ways. We went from, when I came, having 900 students—and we had to push to get that. In the sixties they went from 300-and-something to 600 students. So we had 900 students when Roy Herberger came. He saw the possibility of having a lot more students, so it went up to 1,600. We weren't able to sustain that, in a lot of ways: partly because the job market limits how many students we can put out into the field, and partly because there isn't the market out there. So then the student body shrank some. But while the student body **here** shrank, the Executive Education Program **soared**. That's another **really** big change. When I came, we had one person handling the Thunderbird Management Center, what it was called then. Wally Parker was the person in charge, and he did a great job. He had a staff of one, a secretary, and that was it. And they had limited office space, limited classroom space, and it was almost all customized programs. A company would call, they needed somebody, a group of people to be trained to go to Chile, so we would train them.

Executive Education really took off under Roy Herberger, and that is a **big** change. It's a big change in budget, it's a big change for the faculty, in what they are required to do or asked to do. It's a much higher level of demand for the faculty. And it's a change in the space. Now, Executive Education facilities occupy a **great** deal more space then they did when I first came. So Executive Education is another big, big change.

Another change is in the external environment of International Business Education. **Huge** change. When I came…. Well, let me go back into the seventies. In the sixties, we were the only game in town. We were the **only** ones who did it **at all**. No one else was teaching international business education, or business management. Then in the mid seventies, the University of South Carolina came to visit. They wanted to do what we do. And President Voris was very gracious and took them around. And they did, in fact, copy the Thunderbird Model about twenty-five years after we started. So they were the second to do all of this.

Then in the late eighties, the 1990s, **everybody** was on the world bandwagon, and **everybody** was global. If they had three courses in global management, they thought they were the international business management school of the world. And it was **very** difficult for us to differentiate ourselves in this new market. That change in the external environment really had an impact on us. Again, we were not able to sustain that high enrollment, because we were no longer the only game in town. So that has affected us, and continues to affect us, and **will** continue to affect us. It forces the school to be more innovative in how they offer their programs. And it allows the student a lot more choice,

but how do we say, "We're more international than the international others that do this"? It's very difficult, and the challenges are just huge.

Another big change that is really visible, and it's the first thing anybody notices when they have been away from the campus, is the facilities. The school has changed remarkably. It's really a beautiful campus. When I came, when you walked out of the Career Services, that's the Talley Building, the asphalt between the Talley Building and the Yount Building—it was **all** asphalt—and it just hit you in the face, in the heat of the summer. It was not attractive. They had the Yount Building and West Apartments. West Apartments was somewhat new. Those were pretty good facilities, and the Talley Building. But other than that, a lot of the classes were still offered in the old buildings. The Snell Learning Center had been built, however, so that was good, and that was a nice facility, especially for the languages, because the two wings accommodated only eight students in each classroom—up to ten, I think, in each classroom. So that was nice. But the facilities have changed, the landscaping is beautiful. Bud Clutter was the landscaper who created this beautiful desert landscape, and did a **really** nice job. So those are probably the **major** changes, I think, that I would have observed.

HAMMOND: Okay. Maybe you can tell us from that same perspective, what are some of the missteps you've seen the school take, from observing its history?

CROWELL: You know, it's interesting, the school is such a great idea, and when it started it opened the doors with 285 students. And we have had some missed opportunities. One of those occurred in the fifties. And I don't think it is necessarily a criticism as much as it is a commentary on the times. We didn't realize how great the school could become, and what an advantage it was to have a degree in international management. So we

remained a trade school, very much for all of those years, the American Institute for Foreign Trade. And the enrollment stayed very much the same between 200 and 300 students. They struggled mightily. And I don't know what they should have done differently, except that if, during those years, they had touted the importance of this degree, that perhaps we would have established our niche earlier. So that's one of the missed opportunities, I think.

Then in the late sixties they hired a president who lasted one year, to the **great** credit of Frank Snell and the board of trustees, who realized this was the wrong person for the wrong place. He was not comfortable in the West. He was not comfortable with the institution as it was, and wanted to change it overnight. And that was a serious mistake.

HAMMOND: And this was….

CROWELL: This was Robert Delaney. It turned out he actually did not have a Ph.D., although he said he did. And they checked into that. Dr. Gulick looked up his credentials and he had falsified his credentials. But to the great credit of the board of trustees, they dismissed him almost immediately. He lasted a year, as I said. So that was kind of one of those, "Whoops, shouldn't have done that!"

In the late nineties, early 2000—might have been in early 2000—the decision was made to eliminate the Language Department. They have since reinstituted the language requirement, but that was a hiccup that turned out—I don't know that it should have **remained** the same, but the elimination of the language requirement, period, was probably a mistake, and they realized that, so they've since corrected that. Those are the ones that come to mind. Not a lot of serious problems.

HAMMOND: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about working for President Voris, and what were some of his characteristics as a leader, and what do you see as the major accomplishment during his years?

CROWELL: Dr. Voris was a **very** strong president. And he was the right person at the **right** time. He came in right after Delaney. Well, Delaney wanted to change everything right away. So the board of trustees, when they recruited Dr. Voris, they gave him a clear mandate to take it slow. And he did, which was right in line with his own philosophy and his own personality. On a personal level, he was extremely impatient. He didn't want anyone to delay. You were to be prompt. His personal style was impatience. But his strategic style was **enormously** patient. He was very goal oriented. He knew **exactly** what he wanted to accomplish, and he knew what he had to do to get those things accomplished, but he was willing to take his time and take the steps that…. (recording accidentally paused) Anyway, Dr. Voris was very goal oriented, and he knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish. He knew that he needed to transform the faculty into a real academic faculty. And he knew he needed to recruit students. He knew he needed to upgrade the curriculum, and it took a long time to do that. He also knew he needed to transform the physical facilities. When he came, the physical facilities were really in bad shape, and they had been somewhat neglected for a time period. So he was trying to make sure the pipes weren't leaking. At the same time, he was hiring an Academic Vice-president, who was Dr. Marshall Geer, to lead the academic development. So he kept those goals in mind, and ultimately he did make an **enormous** change in the school. I think his greatest accomplishment was transforming it from a trade school to a serious graduate school of management. He had been a dean at the University of Arizona, so he

knew exactly what a graduate program should do and should be. And he was also an internationalist in his own right. He had been in Saudi Arabia and in Beirut for quite some time, over three years, I think, as a visiting professor, visiting faculty member. So his patience in that development paid off. But it took a long time, he was there eighteen years. At the end of the eighteen years, we had new facilities, we had the Modern Language Building, the Computer Center, the Pavilion and Mall, and he had developed some technology, but not much. He was, as I said at the beginning, he was a very strong leader, so what happened during his time period was led by him. And he gave Dr. Geer his marching orders, and let him do his work. But make no mistake, Dr. Voris was in charge. And that was important at that time, because they needed a leader who would really lead. This was not a consensus operation. This was Dr. Voris's baby, and he led it very strongly, and well. He was good.

HAMMOND: I would ask you the same question about President Herberger. Can you talk a little about what it was like working for him, and what you see as the major accomplishments during his years?

CROWELL: Roy Herberger was a completely different person. He had **enormous** personal charisma. He was just a really nice guy, everybody liked him. He was warm. And that helped him to do some of the things that **he** did. He had **very**, very ambitious goals, and he also was very goal oriented. He knew exactly what he wanted to do, and pretty much how he wanted to get it done. And like Dr. Voris, he picked people that he thought could do that job for him. One of his objectives was to develop the Executive Education Program, which at that time was really minimal. He picked Ed Barrett to lead that program, and it just took off and became a **very** important part of the financial part of

the institution. He wanted to develop the faculty, so he picked certain faculty members that he knew that could teach in the way that he wanted them to teach. So he wanted to improve the school. He knew from the minute he got here that we needed accreditation, so he figured out how to do that. He was **very** big on technology. I don't think he had been here a year before we had IBM in our pocket to help us develop the infrastructure for, and the computerization, and **all** of the multiple technology aspects that developed under Roy. He knew he wanted the school bigger, and he did. He allowed us to get up to the 1,600 students. And that was the right number at the right time. It was a good thing that he could do that.

So he was, as I said, very goal oriented. Because he was so charismatic, he was able to go out into the Phoenix community, really helped the Phoenix community understand what the school was all about—some of the leaders of the Phoenix community. Did that help us financially as I think Roy hoped it would? Not necessarily. They did not prove to be generous, but certainly they knew a lot more about the school under Roy. Voris was a little more reserved, and **didn't** get out into the community as much. Roy was more of a consensus builder. He encouraged consensus.

Oh! one of the things about Dr. Voris that is **so** important, is that he was a **champion** of faculty governance. Before him, there was no Faculty Senate, there was no faculty development for curriculum. The curriculum stayed the same. Under Dr. Voris, the Faculty Senate was created, and the idea of faculty governance became an important point, and an important aspect of the institution. And it was under those faculty years that the curriculum changes were made that put us really on the track toward accreditation.

One of the things about Roy was that he was very genuine. You felt like you'd known him for a long time. You'd meet him once, and he was just a genuine nice person. But he also was very impatient. Unlike Dr. Voris, who was impatient in his personal relationships, and patient in the strategic sense; Roy was **im**patient in the strategic sense, he wanted to get it all done **now**—and he almost did! By 1994, we had the IBIC [International Business Information Centre] open. We had the new buildings. We had some changes in the curriculum, and the student body had grown to the 1,600. The Executive Education Program had blossomed. So in just five years, he accomplished an **enormous** amount, thanks to his impatience and his direction in moving it forward.

HAMMOND: Okay. You've mentioned the AACSB accreditation a couple times, and I would agree with you, that **was** a turning point for the school. Can you talk about how that became a goal and how it was achieved?

CROWELL: AACSB accreditation is very interesting. We had become accredited by North Central Association under President Peterson. And that was **very** important. But that was just the first accreditation, and that was basic. But for a business school, AACSB accreditation was very important. To understand how this happened, you have to go into the development of higher business education overall. The AACSB would accredit schools only based on a very rigid set of standards that were primarily curriculum and research based. So a business school could get accredited if they had **these** courses, and if they had faculty who published in **these** journals, and that was pretty much it. But around the country, a lot of schools were being developed that were doing things a little differently. There were some state schools, for example, in which the legislature would not **let** the faculty publish, that that was not a criteria for that school, so

they could not be accredited. Their business school could not be accredited. There were schools of real estate business being developed. There were schools that were very specialized, and we were one of those, but we were probably the most prominent of the schools of business that remained non accredited. And in a sense, that was almost an embarrassment for the AACSB, to have a school like Thunderbird. And it then became ranked as one of the best schools, but was not accredited! So this whole milieu of higher education was shifting, and the AACSB, which then stood for the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, decided in their very advanced wisdom, to change their accreditation standards. They had not done that **ever**. It was a **huge**, huge change for the AACSB. And they didn't change just a little bit, this was a sea change for them. They changed from granting accreditation on this very rigid criteria, all the way over to accrediting schools based on their mission. Wow. That was big. So Thunderbird, of course, was perfect. We were the poster child for mission-based education. Nobody else could identify a mission the way we could, and we'd done it, and we'd done it well for all these years. So both President Voris and President Herberger had said, "We will not change the school to meet AACSB accreditation. Instead, we will work"—and they both worked very hard—"within the AACSB to get **them** to change their standards." I mean, you think about changing a big organization like the AACSB. So Dr. Voris was on their international committee for many years, and he was a proponent of change. But of course, remember, his style was much more patient. Roy was much more impatient, but the times were right for a Roy Herberger to be impatient. So he came in and really helped, then, the AACSB to make this change. And they changed it based on mission. In 1994, that change was voted in, in April, at the AACSB meeting. That was amazing.

And the first school to be accredited under those new standards was in fact Thunderbird. So that was really exciting. And it was very important because now we were on the books, equal with all the other institutions, all the other graduate schools of business. We were no longer a maverick. We were the "in" school.

Getting that AACSB accreditation **internally** took a lot of work, because we had not applied for accreditation from **that** institution before. So there were some very specific requirements. Roy appointed a committee to develop the whole application, which was three notebooks full of material. And so he asked me to serve on the committee. I did not head the committee. There was a faculty member and an administrator that headed that committee. We had a lot of meetings, as you can imagine, and everybody submitted their information. On one occasion it went to Roy Herberger, and he realized this was not going to be good. So he called the two administrators and me into his office. He was as firm as I have ever seen him, and he said, "This is absolutely essential to this institution, and we have to do it right." So he asked me to handle the remaining application, and to take what had been done and to transform it into an application that would work. And so that particular time, I was awfully busy, because I still didn't have much staff. So I worked during the day on my normal job, and then I worked at night for two weeks, getting this into shape. And we got it in at the deadline. I can still remember assembling all this information. And Roy had given me some instructions on what exactly we needed to do to get this into shape that was going to guarantee accreditation, because we **couldn't** miss this one. And so we did get the accreditation, and that was very exciting. What that meant was, for example, rankings in *Business Week*, the only schools who were ranked in *Business Week* were schools that

were accredited by AACSB. And I went to *Business Week*, and I said, "Early in my career here, I went and I visited *Business Week*. John Byrne was the editor then, who handled higher education, and his first question to me was, 'So, Nelda, when is Thunderbird going to get AACSB accreditation?'" Well, we got it, and as soon as we got it, *Business Week* put us in the rankings. *U.S. News and World Report* put us in the rankings. And then a lot of others followed: *Financial Times, Wall Street Journal,* all of those rankings that we now talk about, just fell into place over the years with AACSB accreditation. That was only **one** element.

There were a lot of other things that are more academic, that made a difference for us. We are visited by AACSB now. We are evaluated, and our accreditation continues. So it was **very** important.

HAMMOND: Okay. You had mentioned getting the first Number One ranking in *U.S. News and World Report*, which was another major event for the school, and we've consistently held that Number One ranking. How did the school deal with the whole issue of rankings at that time?

CROWELL: The first time we were ranked by *U.S. News*, it was nice, it was good to have it, but it wasn't the be-all and end-all of Thunderbird or of academics. It has since become extremely important. But at that time, we certainly wanted to be ranked, but we also wanted to maintain our individuality and our uniqueness. So being ranked wasn't necessarily the most important thing on our agenda. When we were ranked, of course we touted it in all our publications, and it was nice to be Number One in International Management. University of South Carolina, the previous year, had been—and that previous year was the first time they ever actually ranked international management

schools. So when they ranked South Carolina Number One, that was a bit of a shock. And then of course the next year we got the rankings. But it certainly was not as important as it is today. The rankings have always had a good news/bad news side. They are sometimes not an accurate reflection of what a school is. And it doesn't matter what the school is, everybody complains about them. But it's a fact that we have to live with. So we had some visitors out from the different media, and they could see what we are. So it was a good thing, but it didn't matter as much.

HAMMOND: Okay. And let's go back and talk a little bit about the marketing and communications. The way those have been done at Thunderbird has changed so much over the years, and it's quite different now, from the how-to aspects, to the strategies, and what is produced or not produced. Can you describe for us some aspects of your work, such as producing the catalog that perhaps have seen the greatest change?

CROWELL: It is huge. It's **so** different now. And there are good and bad points of any kind of progress. When I first came, everything was print. We didn't even use radio very much—it was all print. And that was my specialty, this is why I was hired. And we had some good graphic designers. And as I said, I was able to get all of the print communication under one roof, which was big. And it was a challenge. Now, we didn't have much. We had the catalog and a few brochures. So one of the things that we did in the office while I was in there is to develop an internal newsletter. We'd not had one before. And I said, "We're going to put one out once a week." And everybody said, "What are you going to put in it?! There's no news." I said, "We have plenty of news." And so we did. And there **is** a lot happening on this campus. The change now is that we have **multiple** newsletters. We have multiple avenues of communication. So where

when I started we had one catalog, one newsletter, an assortment of small brochures all with the same graphic design, now we have, oh, I would say it's expanded tenfold. So it's a big change, and the medium has changed. It was print—that was it. Now, it's probably much less print. In fact, I would say it's gone from being 100% print and no other, and zero other, to being maybe, I don't know, I'd guess maybe 20% print, maybe not even that. Electronic communication has mushroomed. It's enabled us to reach more people in a more individualized way. So you target almost to the person, or certainly to groups of people and what they're interested in. So that whole change from print to electronics and technology. And it's interesting to look at, too, because you communicate in a little different way. It's much more personalized. There is much more mass communication. You have one piece.

The catalog was a **big** job then. Oh my goodness it was hard to put together! I absolutely could never have done it without Dick Bossert. He was amazing to get the academic community to develop their course materials, and their course description. Such simple things that you would think would be easy, are very difficult when you have faculty, because that's not their area of expertise. So we were able to really coordinate this whole thing so that when the student came in, they knew exactly what they could get and it was all laid out. Now it's much more complicated—**much** more complicated. So the student has, what, five different degrees to choose from. So it's targeted, it's much more complex, but it's also much more individualized. So a student can get more of what is their own way of getting the international business degree.

The catalog has always been a centerpiece for Communication. Now, of course, it's online. But now the website has **all** of the information. The good news is, it's all

there. The bad news is, there is much, much, much **more** information. Because it isn't limited by the printed page, a department or a center doesn't have to constrain their communication, they can tell it all. And so that's not necessarily good, because it sometimes is difficult for the outside person to get the essence of the information. It was proliferation of everything.

HAMMOND: You know, I think your catalog was an award-winning publication, and the photography was so beautiful, and truly did tell a lot of the story about Thunderbird. I don't know if you want to talk a little about how you changed that catalog from a pretty drab little publication, to a very flashy, colorful marketing tool.

CROWELL: We did. And that was an exciting time. The minute I came in, I looked at the catalog, and I thought, "This needs the touch of a professional." And John Arthur absolutely agreed. He said, "First of all, we want to upgrade the catalog, but secondly we want a view book." So we developed a view book. I had some connections in the communication world when I first started here, that I'd already developed at ASU, so I knew something about graphic design, and I knew some people who could really do it well. So I was able to get some funding, and hired some really good graphic designers, and then some even better ones as time went on. When we first changed the catalog, we still had to have black-and-white photos, and we had those all the way through 1990, I think. When I first came, it was a small catalog about six inches by nine inches. And we kept that format for quite a while. As I said, Dr. Voris was very patient with change, and so he wasn't necessarily anxious to make a **big** change. He just wanted it to look really classy, and we organized it better so students could get better information. But when Roy came in, one of the first things he told me, before he even became president, he came

onto the campus and had an office in April, and he didn't take office until the end of June. So he was on campus three months before he ever took office. And one of the first things he said is, "I want this catalog to be bigger, flashier, and much better-looking." And that made me happy, so I went looking for another graphic designer that I thought could really do the job. And I found a designer in Steve Esser. Steve and Pam Esser were a couple who operated a very small graphic design operation. Since then, they've been voted the top graphic design firm in the city, in the valley. But I got them, and one of the things we wanted to do was to develop a whole series of publications that would have graphic unity, and that was **so** important. And I looked at their work, and they had done several things like that, where everything tied together, it looked like it was one school. And that was very important to me. We're a small school, we can't look like we have a thousand different things. You want to present an image that people will remember.

So I felt like it was really important to have it look good, to have it read well. And even for the newsletter I had it put on extra-heavy paper so that people **in** the school would feel good about themselves. Thunderbird has always had kind of an inferiority complex. And that comes across in a lot of different ways, and it's still true. But I wanted people to feel like they're working for the best school of business in the country. So we wanted to look that way. Now I think they look even better. They've **really** come a long way, and it's beautiful. The work that comes out of the graphic design communications area is fabulous.

HAMMOND: Your flag motif that was used for so many of the school's publications got to be quite a symbol of Thunderbird for a long time, and a lot of the publications had that motif. How did you decide on that being….

CROWELL: You know, that was very interesting, because I was talking a little bit earlier, how do you show that you're more international than all the other international somebodies around the world? And so when I talked to the graphic designer, I said, "I don't care what else you do, but we have to look international. I want five designs, and I'm going to show them around, and we'll see what people feel like works." So there was one that kind of was sort of a space thing, and looked like the globe from space. That was one of them. There was another one that had international symbols: the Eiffel Tower and what not, Big Ben and so on. And then the flags. And I don't remember what the other two were. So I had them all put on great big posters, and I had them lined up in my office, and I brought in a whole bunch of people. I grabbed people from Admissions, I had some students that I knew, and my student helpers, and the Development Office, and the faculty. I brought them all in, and I showed them all the five [designs]. I didn't say anything. I just let them pick their favorite. And the flags were by far the favorite. So then we took those flags and used them in a way…. At that time, it was very different. We got quite a few awards for that particular graphic design issue, because the problem we had was that everybody wanted their own brochure. The Associated Students, they wanted a brochure. The Language Department wanted a brochure for their conference. There were a couple of centers, they wanted their own brochure. Everybody wanted their own brochure, and that was going to be very expensive. But we wanted color, and we **really** wanted those flags. So the assignment to the graphic designer was

to create a shell that we could actually put on a Xerox copier and copy anybody's text, insert a photo or two, and *voila*, they would have their "own" brochure, without having to print a whole press run of color brochures. That was a revelation for everybody. They could just hand us text, we would do it, lay it out, and it really worked, so that we had a comprehensive design motif that said "international." And the reason that people loved the flags is that it said "international." The issue that you have to deal with is how do you differentiate Thunderbird's international **business** from, say, a school that offers courses in international public policy, international relations? We're business—they're international relations. And the down side of the flags is that it still doesn't say "business." And how you express that business aspect was a problem that we never were really able to solve **visually**.

Oh! I remember one of the others was international faces. One of the designs had international faces, which is very interesting, except that's America—it doesn't say anything about our being international business, it just says something about our student population. And everybody had international students. So it was an interesting challenge to create this more-international-than-anybody-else look.

HAMMOND: Those shells were a huge success. I used them here in the IBIC. I remember them very well. You've also served as the school's historian. When did you get interested in the history of the school, and can you tell us some of the things you've done to create and preserve a historical record for Thunderbird, and how you were able to save so much for the archives?

CROWELL: First of all, I have an undergraduate minor in history. I think I've always … all my life I've had a sense of the history of wherever I am and what I do. So that's part

of it, it's just an innate sense of history. But also, this is so different—and when I first came onto the campus, when I came over here to go swimming, the hangars were here, and it just seemed like such an interesting history. Then when I took over the Office of Communication, I had a lot of stuff, a **lot** of paper, a lot of photos. And other offices had a lot of things. But because one of our missions was to consolidate everything into the one Office of Communication, people sent us their photos, and their texts, and everything. So very early on, there became kind of a pattern of sending everything to the Office of Communication. And I often needed to refer to some of those things to be able to write the text and whatever I needed to write. So we had a lot of information, and we got a lot of information. And then in the course of my work, a lot of things came across my desk, because I would need to edit something: the course manuals, for example; or the Faculty Senate handbook. And a lot of those things I just kept, because I couldn't bear to throw them away because I knew they would never be recovered and nobody else would save them. So I kept a lot of these things in my files. Well, the files just began to bulge. So I would put the old things that I didn't need anymore into boxes. And I had somebody give me a storage room over in "C" Building. And it was a little room that was off to one side. It had no windows in it. And we called it The Archives. And so I would say to my secretary or a helper, "Put these files into a box and send them over to The Archives," and they would do that. And then for the, must have been the fortieth anniversary, we really began to develop a sense of history about the school. The fortieth anniversary, wow, been here forty years. This is big! So I had a student help me write a history, and we used that as a fundraiser. And at that point, there were a lot of people who were still alive, so we did tape recordings—when we had tape—and taped these

conversations with people like Berger Erickson and Finley Peter Dunn, and some of the faculty, and the president—just a lot of people who are now gone. And thank goodness we did that! And then we really began to focus on getting these photos together, so that we had a lot of the photos. And then we began to collect them into categories so that we could **get** them, **find** them, when we wanted them. And we still had this whole bunch of stuff over in The Archives. And I thought it was just so important to collect all of this, we called it, as I said, The Archives. And you, Carol Hammond, called me one day, and you said, "Nelda, I understand you have The Archives over in your office." I remember this conversation vividly. And I said, "Well, yes, we have some boxes over there, and we call them The Archives, but they're not much." This was, if I remember right, about January or February of 1999.

HAMMOND: Yes.

CROWELL: And you said, "Have you ever thought of moving those over to the library?" And I said, "That is a **great** idea!" And we talked, and I said, "I need to tell you that I'm retiring from this position at the end of this year. I think there's a part-time job in working and actually developing The Archives." You said, "Well, I've been thinking about hiring a part-time person." Somehow that conversation went around, and we worked it out so that then I could really focus, after I retired from my full-time job, as a part-time archivist. And that has been fun! That has been just a joy to be able to actually organize The Archives and develop it into something that is accessible for the whole campus, and we certainly do get a lot of calls and a lot of inquiries about the history—from inside and outside.

HAMMOND: And we're lucky that it has all been saved. I think your fortieth anniversary history that you wrote, and the fiftieth anniversary, are really the basis of all the work that we have on the history of this school.

CROWELL: Well, it is helpful to know what the facts are, and the actual reality of the history of the school, **because** the school is so unique. And in the field of higher education, Thunderbird holds a unique spot. It stands as a symbol of the American educational system, and its transformation into a global educational system. It stands as a symbol of this country, and its transition from wartime to peacetime, where once these very grounds taught pilots to fly in the theater of the war, now the theater is business, and we are teaching these "pilots" to manage and traverse the skies of business. So the school is important, it's not just **any** school. And the history is not just **any** history. It's really a critical symbol, I think.

HAMMOND: Since you are, as we've said, the school's historian, can you comment on some of the consistent themes you've seen throughout the sixty-plus years of Thunderbird, and especially the years that you've been here?

CROWELL: I think I mentioned at the beginning, the theme of the three-part curriculum, and the emphasis on the **whole** person, as opposed to **just** the person who has studied finance. The idea, and now many business schools are copying this idea of the business person being really kind of an all-encompassing, knowledge-based person. So that curriculum, I think, is important.

The students are still those same students. That Thunderbird Model of student is still the same. There is a theme that resonates through every president. They have all said, "We are not widely known enough in our own community." Some presidents,

Dr. Voris for example, used that, and took a spin on it, to make that an advantage. We were the best-kept secret in the valley, and he kind of touted that. He sort of made a point of pride that we are better known outside of the valley than in the valley. And it's true, our market isn't really strong in the valley. So that has just resonated with every president. You can look at Dr. Shurz when he was president in the fifties.

The alumni are very different, I think. The kind of student, as I said, that comes here to a school in the desert and so on, that kind of student then goes on to be an alumnus that is different from the Harvard Business School alum. They are very closely allied to each other. I was amazed when the first alumni reunion I ever went to, and I noticed how they knew each other, and they met. When we were in Thailand for the alumni reunion, it was very interesting, because the entire business community of Thailand, they had business conferences—Chamber of Commerce, I think it was—they were **all** T-birds! They said, "We just have alumni meetings, that's all. It's just all the Chamber of Commerce." The alumni are very entrepreneurial, and they continue to be. Very often they go out into business and then later start their own businesses. They are a certain kind of person. And the fact that we have alumni reunions abroad is just amazing to people who are from other schools of business. They don't even understand that concept. Even Harvard doesn't do it.

I think the financial struggles are a theme that has resonated all the way through. When this school was **very** young, during those years of the fifties, Berger Erickson used to make everybody turn the—they had adding machines then—and you took the adding machine tape, and you unrolled it and you turned it over and you used the back side! (laughter) The struggle to get good students. And we have never—I won't say never—

but we have tried not to reduce our standards so that we're accepting people that don't belong here. Even when we've made an exception and somebody doesn't have the right grades, or doesn't meet the academic standards, sometimes we'll see in an interview—and I think Sam Garvin was a good example, where he really wouldn't have met the qualifications, but he was admitted based on some qualities that he had. And that happens a lot, because again, it is that Thunderbird Student Model that we're looking at.

But those financial struggles have been with us since Day One, when they tried to get money from corporations. Part of it is that Phoenix is not a big headquarters for major corporations. And major corporations tend to give to institutions that are in their headquarters areas. It's a problem for us, our location.

I think there has always been a bit of tension between the faculty and the administration. Some years it has been minimal. Some years it has been stronger. But that tension is normal in a university setting. It hasn't ever gotten out of hand, but there has always been that certain thread of tension.

And there've always been student complaints. They always complain. If they're not complaining about the food, they're complaining about their grades, and So-and-So won't change their grade. That is just…. We're lucky if they complain about the food, because it means they don't complain about something else. (laughter) But yeah, there is that. Those, I think, are the main ones.

HAMMOND: Okay. I'm wondering also who you would identify as some of the most significant players in the history of the school for your years, besides the presidents that you've worked for.

CROWELL: You know, I think the presidents appoint or select or work with key people on the campus, and the people that they work with are often the most important people in the school. When Dr. Voris was president, he picked Dr. Marshall Geer to be his point person for academic affairs. Geer was amazing. He worked his way into the North Central Association and became a key player in North Central Association. And that was at a time when during just before Voris came, our North Central Association was at risk, our accreditation from North Central. So Dr. Geer was really important, and he recruited some very important faculty, thanks to his involvement in North Central. So he was a very, very big player in the Voris years.

Dick Bossert does not get enough credit for what he has done for the school. He was somebody who was behind the scenes **all** the time. He never was a front-row player. He had very low visibility, but he was the kind of person who got things done. I used to tease him about his acting career, because he was acting head of the Computer Center, he was acting head of the World Business Department. I said he's had more acting jobs than Jimmy Stewart. But he always, **always** put the school first. He moved, especially in academic affairs, he was sort of the assistant vice-president for academic affairs under Dr. Geer, and he got **so** much done. He was just amazing.

I think under Roy Herberger, Roy brought with him Jenny St. John and her husband, Mischa Semanitzky [phonetic]. He brought Mischa in as his personal assistant, and Jenny was the vice-president for External Affairs. And both of them, along with Roy, had a real vision for what they wanted the school to become. So starting especially with the physical facilities, they made sure that the IBIC was going to be a top-notch facility, that it was going to be beautiful, and would function in a different way from the

normal library. So they knew a consultant, and they brought in a consultant. Jenny was involved in fundraising. And one of her great strengths is that she would go for the big money. And so if somebody said, "Oh, we think we can get $25,000 out of them," she'd say, "Oh, no, I think we can get $25 **million**." Maybe she didn't get $25 million, maybe she got a million, maybe she got $500,000, but she always got more than people expected. And part of it was her own personal dynamism. She was a very strong person, and really made sure that the institution was going the direction that Roy wanted it to go. So those two were very important.

Another one—and I mentioned him earlier—is Ed Barrett—in Executive Education. Roy brought Ed in to run Executive Education, and he gave him a blank slate. Ed Barrett needed something, wanted something, he got it, because Roy wanted it to succeed—and it did! And that is **greatly** to Ed Barrett's credit.

The IBIC—**you**, Carol—have made an **enormous** contribution, because the IBIC, which once had a ton of books, has transformed its knowledge delivery, like Communication, from print to technology. And that's a **huge** change. So the building, which was built for books, now holds computers, **and** the student groups that meet here. Now there's many more facilities for them to be able to do that.

So there are key players all along the way. Career Services has had a very rough responsibility. If the students don't get jobs, nobody's happy. And we often say, "If the students don't have jobs, we don't have jobs." Because if the students don't get jobs, there is no school. And that's been key. I think everybody in Career Services has had a role to play, but I think probably Jim Case did a good job when he was here, but I think

Kip Harrell has been a **really** good force in Career Services in recent years. And I think he's another one that's behind the scenes, doesn't get a lot of credit for what he does.

Oh! Cliff Cox is another one in the Voris years. An **amazing** person. Cliff came here out of Purdue. He had been CEO of Armour Dial. He has an agricultural base. His Ph.D. work was primarily in agribusiness, and after he retired, he even did that. But behind the scenes, Cliff's work with the global business group, global advisory group, Thunderbird Global Council, he really used that group of business people in a way that I think was **very** beneficial for the school. And he was head of the World Business Department and really did an amazing job bringing in faculty, and holding their feet to the fire to make them produce and teach and do well. He was excellent.

HAMMOND: You have talked just a little about the alumni, and I know you have worked with them extensively and traveled quite a bit. Do you have any other comments about the school's relationship with its alumni?

CROWELL: It's very interesting. Part of the relationship is due to the fact that the school is very young, so even the alumni in the fifties, by the 1970s, they had not matured in their careers. So the relationship was a little tenuous. They weren't of much value, financially. And they demanded a lot of the school. They always **have** demanded a lot. But in the seventies, we had our first chairman of the board of trustees as an alumnus, was Joe Klein—first time ever. That kind of marked the opportunity for alumni to become more involved in the school. But that didn't really happen until late in Roy Herberger's term, late in the nineties—partly because they had not matured. We didn't have a lot of wealthy alumni who had developed their businesses to a point where they were of that stature—not like Harvard, for example, where it has a 200-, 300-year history.

But in the nineties we began to see some alumni become attached to the school who had the kind of stature where they could make a real contribution in advice, and financially, to actually help the institution, and so it was a mutually beneficial thing. And we had Sam Garvin then, who had studied in his entrepreneur class, and had developed his business plan in that class under Paul Johnson, and then went on to **do** that business and become a multi-millionaire and gave back to the school. Scott Walker is another one who actually gave something back as a member of the business community of substantial stature. So then we began to see a lot more of that late in Roy Herberger's term. And Ángel Cabrera has done a **very** good job of cultivating high-level alumni, and seeing what the alumni and the relationship can do for the school and to make it a mutually beneficial relationship. And I see that alumni body becoming sort of reattached to the school. Jenny was superb at developing informational programs, the Global Business Forums, that transformed the alumni reunions into something that was actually an event of substance. And again, that was that whole transition from the alumni who got together because they're all good friends, to alumni who got together because they could reinforce their business position, and use the school's resources to enhance their own career. And then, going on that next step to where their career is now developed and they can give back.

HAMMOND: I also would have you say something about the *Thunderbird Magazine*, because it stood as such a record of the school for such a very long time, both in the articles that were written and in the photography that is there. So can you tell us a little bit about putting that together, and how the magazine has become what it is now?

CROWELL: You know, it really is a nice magazine. Daryl James is now the editor, and he does a fine job. He's a good writer, and he's got some very interesting things. When I came, the alumni magazine was edited by a student spouse. It was fine. Tom Bria who headed the Alumni Department, said however, that when we resorted to carrying recipes, it was (laughs) not what it should be. So we transformed it some, and did some theme issues. And you're right about it being a real reflection of the institution, because it does carry information. In most cases, it **was** before electronic communication, the only way that alumni had of getting information about the school, and getting a feel for the tone of the school. So we talked about, and gradually increased the number of articles about alumni who were doing interesting things. And now it does carry a lot of those kinds of articles. The president didn't particularly want to be featured under Voris. He didn't particularly want to be featured in the magazine. I think now it's a much greater reflection of the current president. I think now it doesn't carry as much social information. There's less of an emphasis on the updates. When I first came, that was kind of the big thing. But I really like the evolution of the magazine. We had some good designers. We had Pat Kenny, who for years did that graphic design and did a beautiful job. And now they've moved the design in house, and the in-house designer I think does an excellent job. The photography, we've **always** had professional photographers. It makes it look better.

HAMMOND: Okay. Well, my last question for you is maybe one of the ones I'll enjoy the most, and that is, I'd like to know what are some of your best memories about Thunderbird?

CROWELL: You know, I thought about that. I have **so** many. One of my favorites is the first meeting of the World Business Advisory Council. And I had been here one month, and Bob Horn, who was Vice-president for External Affairs, had made the decision that we needed to have this group of business people as an advisory group. And they were really, really interesting. He had about half alumni, and half represented businesses that recruited at Thunderbird. And **all** of them were businesses that were important to us, either for fundraising, or for recruitment of student employees. So he called this meeting. I was in charge of showing the slide show. That was my **big** job. And I remember that Jim Parkel was the first president. He was **very** strong. He was a powerful person. Just his personality was **very** powerful. And the first meeting they started, Bob Horn kind of eased gradually into talking about fundraising, because of course that was his job. And Jim Parkel lit into him in private and said, "If you want our advice, we'll give you our advice, but **do not** ask this group for money." So that first meeting defined the World Business Advisory Council. And I participated in that group for a **very** long time, and sort of was the coordinator for them, along with the External Affairs Office. Those people became my good friends—and still are! I still call them my friends.

Another good memory that I'll never forget, and that was AACSB accreditation, and putting together those documents, and getting that all ready, **in time**, because we had to get them to the Federal Express Office by six o'clock, and it was 4:30 and we still hadn't finished getting them together. I had graduate assistants, and I had a brand-new graduate assistant whose name was Mary Mitchell. She pitched in, and we all got it in, and we got it down to the Federal Express Office. So there was just a lot of fun.

I had a **very** good staff the entire time I was in the Office of Communication. I had Carol Naftzger, who started out as my secretary and became editor of the magazine, and was a **fine** editor. Pam Selthun, who started out knowing a little bit about technology and actually ended up being a graphic designer for the catalog and some other things. I started out with no secretary. I had then two half-time secretaries, and then a full-time secretary, Joann Toole became my full-time secretary, and she was good. And Gwen Swanson was just wonderful. We had some good times. So I **loved** my staff.

Another favorite, favorite memory that I will **never** forget is when I went to New York on my first media visit. And this was, I think—gosh, it was maybe two years after I'd started—it was **very** soon, so it must have been '85. I had to make cold calls. Nobody knew anything about Thunderbird. And you'd call them long distance and they wouldn't talk to you. So I just walked into media visits. And I walked into *The Wall Street Journal*, which is at the Lower Manhattan end, and I had to get to the Upper end. I'd gotten an appointment with somebody at *Forbes*. Yay! I was **so** happy! It was my last call of the day. So I went from *The Wall Street Journal*, which is at the one end of Manhattan, up to *Business Week*, which is at the other end of Manhattan, got in to see somebody there. But in the meantime, the subway stopped. I had to get out of the subway, walk down the subway in the dark, with all these other people. We had to evacuate the subway. I was late. I was late to my *Business Week* appointment, but somebody saw me. I saw a junior somebody-or-other anyway. But this *Forbes* appointment was the biggie of the day. I was **so** looking forward to that, and I was way late. I was like an hour and a half late. And I walked into *Forbes*, and the security guy is standing there, and there's **nobody** around, and he calls this fellow whose name was Don

something, and he doesn't answer, he's not here. Oh dear heaven. I waited a while, a long while, and he wasn't gonna show. So I left a note and I said, "I'm sorry we missed connections, I'll call you tomorrow." I didn't tell him that I was an hour and a half late. I just said we missed connection. So I called him the next day, and he said, "Oh! I'm so sorry! I had to leave and take my daughter to the dentist. Please come over. I **really** apologize." And so I got to see him, in person, at *Forbes*, and I gave it my best shot. I was **the** best salesperson Thunderbird has **ever** had, I'm sure! At least I **felt** like it. And he laughed and he said, "You know, this sounds like a good one to me. I just have one favor to ask. Please don't let *The Wall Street Journal* get it first." And so I said, "Not a problem." So he sent a reporter out. Her name was Ann Bagamery, a young woman who was just delightful. She was **very** smart, as you would expect from *Forbes*. When a reporter comes on campus—she was here for three days—you have to make some decisions about how you're going to manage this person. You can manage them very tightly, or you can manage them somewhat loosely. I thought, "I'm just going to wait until she comes, and see what she's like." And she seemed very bright, and she was young, so she knew what college was all about, what graduate students do and don't do, and whatever." So I made the decision to manage her very loosely. And she talked to everybody that would come up to her on campus. We have our share of kooks, and I think every one of them approached her. And I lived in **terror** until that magazine came out. And she wrote the story, featured a really nice picture. They'd hired a photographer out of New Mexico, whose name was Craddock Bagshaw. Craddock Bagshaw did a **wonderful** job of photography. So he took the photos, and she talked to people. She went to the Pub with the students. She interviewed Voris, who was absolutely at his best.

He was totally charming. And she wrote the article, and it came out, and it was fabulous. It was a three-page compliment to Thunderbird. So that really was a very strong, strong memory.

I suppose I remember my retirement, because I **loved** my job—until the day I retired. And then I really was happy **not** to be working full-time. I thought I wouldn't like it, but we had a great time retiring, I enjoyed my retirement party, and I made a lot of friends.

HAMMOND: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very much for taking the time to share so much about your job, since you've been such a very key person, both in the IBIC and on the campus. Thank you very much.

CROWELL: It is my pleasure!

[END OF INTERVIEW]